## CHAPTER TWO

# *Early Days*

"ARRIVED at Aden at 4 p.m. The place is not as I had expected and I found I had forgotten all about it. It looked just like a penal settlement and the nearer one got the more unprepossessing the place became"; such was the entry in my diary for October 4th, 1931.

It was the normal reaction of most people who see Aden from the deck of a ship at the tail end of the summer, and, like most people, I knew very little about the town, less about the Protectorate, and nothing at all about the history of the place.

The first authentic recorded mention of Aden is to be found in the Bible at the 23rd verse of the 27th Chapter of Ezekiel, where it is written: "Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur and Chilmad, were thy merchants." When I read this verse I was puzzled by the rendering of Aden as "Eden", and I consulted my Arabic version of the Scriptures and was reassured by finding that the word "Eden" was spelt in precisely the same way as it is written in Arabic today. If additional evidence of the identity of this "Eden" with Aden is required, it is to be found in the very next verse which runs as follows: "These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes . . ." The reference is to the indigo impregnated cloth which is still worn by very many of the inhabitants of the Protectorate and was a common sight in the Colony a few years ago.

The early history of Aden is difficult to piece together, consisting as it does of travellers' tales and records, some undoubtedly true, but others of dubious authenticity, but the one

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### Dhow Building

Dhows are built at Maala by a number of Hadhrami merchants settled in Aden. They turn out about seven vessels a year, the average carrying capacity of which is about 200 tons. The dhows are constructed of Indian teak from the Malabar coast and are well built and fast. They sail to India (Bombay and the Malabar coast) and to the East African coast as well as to neighbouring Arabian ports, and take a large share in local trade, in spite of the competition of the coasting steamers of Messrs. Cowasjee Dinshaw & Brothers and of Monsieur A. Besse (Halal Shipping Company). Monsieur Besse now maintains a fleet of dhows in addition to his motor vessels. Many of these dhows are equipped with auxiliary engines

### Soap Manufacturing

A soap manufacturing industry started by Monsieur Besse in December, 1932, at Maala is progressing satisfactorily. The soap is manufactured by boiling coconut oil and cold processes. Local labour of 40 men is employed, and the output is about 50 cases daily, each case containing 200 cakes, which are disposed of locally or exported to the Red Sea Ports.

### Dyeing

There are three factories which do business in dyeing cloth and each employs on an average about 60 persons daily. There are in addition about 18 dyers who do business on a small scale. The dyed goods are mainly exported to Mombasa, Mogadiscio, Massowa, Hodeidah, and the interior of Arabia.

### Cigarette Making

The cigarette industry is conducted on a fairly large scale by Jews and Greeks with tobacco imported from Egypt.

## VII.—COMMERCE

### Customs

Aden being a free port, there are no customs duties.

### Trade

The trade of Aden is mainly transhipment as the port is a centre for trade between all ports of the world and the neigbouring territories. The principal business is in skins, hides, coffee, cotton piece goods, grain and pulse, sugar, spices, oils, tobacco, gums, shells and salt. The total value of the seaborne trade in the year under report (12 months January to December, 1938) exclusive of transhipment cargo, was Rs. 12,16,02,203 (imports Rs. 8,02,17,766, and exports Rs. 4,13,84,437), showing a decrease of Rs. 42,91,828 as compared

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The increase of Rs.79,67,977 in merchandise was mainly in grain and pulse, hides and skins, coal, oils, vehicles, tea, gums, and salt. The increase of Rs.77,50,796 in treasure was due to transactions in imports and exports of Maria Theresa dollars, in which there was considerable speculation.

The Trade Registration Department was formerly a branch of the Aden Port Trust Revenue Department, but on the recommendation of Mr. J. Sladen, who was deputed to Aden in the year 1906 on special duty, it was separated from the 1st April, 1907, and became a Government department. The department is however supervised by the Secretary, Aden Port Trust.

The old Qafilah office at Barrier Gate, where the registration of inland trade is conducted, was taken over by the Government from the Aden Port Trust in 1910 and subsequently converted into an office and quarters for the Qafilah clerk in 1914.

The following statement shows the total value of the imports and exports sea-borne trade of Aden for the last five years.